



Stranger things have happened by **xxxxxSerenityxxxxx**

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Summary: Hawkins, 1983. Jonathan has been bullied by Steve's gang for a long time. But this has nothing on what new student Billy Hargrove's got coming for him. This brings back memories of the past for Jonathan. At his lowest point he finds support where he would never have expected it.

1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1

September 1st, 1983. Jonathan looked at his alarm clock. 7.00 AM. He couldn't postpone it any longer now, he had to get up. His mom had already left the house to work an early shift so it was up to him to wake up his brother, make him breakfast and get him to school on time. He smiled when he thought of Will. Such a happy kid. He has non-mainstream hobbies like Dungeons and Dragons and video games, and yet despite his 'different-ness', he is completely comfortable with who he is. 'It's probably because he has friends who share his interests', Jonathan thought to himself. 'Because he's so close to Mike, Dustin and Lucas, he is probably not worried about the first day of school at all.' Like his brother, Jonathan was different from other kids his age. Unlike Will, he had never had any friends.

Jonathan had spent the entire summer vacation working at his job at the local movie theater. He cleans the rooms after the movies are over. Jonathan made sure to work as many hours as possible to help his mother with the bills. Money was tight and although she never asked for anything, he knew she wouldn't manage without his contributions. It also gave him something to do in the three months without school. Time passes pretty slowly when you have no one to spend it with. Jonathan liked his job. His coworkers thought he was weird and quiet, but he didn't have to deal with them much. They worked at the counter while he cleaned the rooms. While cleaning he could be alone with his thoughts, just like he preferred. When he was alone, no one could bother him.

Will had woken up really excited today. The first day of school meant that AV club was starting again. He wouldn't stop talking about it, so Jonathan almost had to push him towards the shower so he would be ready on time. In the meantime Jonathan made breakfast. French toast, Will's favorite. He wished he could be as excited about school starting as his brother was. The truth was, there was not much to look forward to for him. In fact, he had barely been able to sleep the past week because of the prospect. He could live with the fact that he had no friends, as long as that meant he was left alone. Sadly that

was never the case.

Ever since elementary school, Steve Harrington and his friends Tommy and Carol had never let a day go by without making his life miserable. They had called him names, tripped him in the hallways, tore up his homework, and shoved him in a locker. Sometimes, it was even worse. Like that one time in freshman year when Nicole, one of the most beautiful girls in the school, had told him she liked him. She had asked him to meet her at the back of the school and overjoyed, he had shown up. Nicole was there, but so was the rest of his class. They stripped him naked and tied him to a pole. They laughed and threw rocks at him.

Eventually they got bored and left. It had taken him hours to get himself loose. They had thrown his clothes away, so he had to walk home naked. When he got home, his brother was asleep and his mother at work. She had left him an angry note on the table asking why he was so late, since it was his turn to watch Will. He had cried himself to sleep. The next morning, out of shame, he made up some excuse about detention, and vowed to himself to never trust anyone but his mother and brother again.

Jonathan had never told anyone about the daily abuse he suffered. His mother was too busy providing for their family, he didn't want to burden her even more with his problems. And his brother was too young for these things. He wanted to preserve his happiness and innocence for as long as possible. So he just took it and suffered in silence.

Last schoolyear, just before summer started, Steve's gang had done their worse yet. Jonathan had always loved photography. He wasn't good with social interaction. When people talk, he could never be really sure what they meant. There might be hidden motives, different layers. But with photography, everything was different. When Jonathan took pictures, he felt the truth revealed itself to him. Pictures don't lie. He loved finding the right setting, the right moment to capture. For over two years, he had saved every penny that wasn't needed for the bills. April this year, he finally had enough to buy his own camera. He got to enjoy it for barely a month. That's when Steve and his gang spotted him taking pictures in town.

"Hey there loser", Carol had said. "What are you doing, spying on people?"

"N-no", said Jonathan, "just taking some pictures".

"What do you think guys?", asked Carol. "don't you think this is weird? This creep never talks to anyone and now he shows up in town just taking pictures of people?"

"I'm not-"

"Shut up loser, she didn't ask you", Tommy interrupted.

Jonathan turned red and quickly shut his mouth.

"I think Carol is right, he is probably some kind of pervert. Not too surprising for a member of the Byers family.", Steve added. "What were you aiming for Byers? Men? Little kids?"

"I was just -"

"I told you to shut up, pervert!", Tommy jumped in again.

Jonathan obeyed and looked around him. He was in an alley surrounded by 4 people. His back was against the wall. Nobody on the street could see them here. His heartbeat rose rapidly as it dawned on him that there was no way to escape.

"Please just let me go, I-" Jonathan winced as he felt Tommy's hand hit him across the face.

"Told you to stop talking", Tommy smirked.

"Maybe we oughta teach this freak a lesson,", said Steve, "take away his little toy."

"No please, not the camera!" Jonathan was pushed against the wall by Tommy as Steve grabbed the camera out of his hand. "Please give it b-" Tommy had kicked him in the stomach and Jonathan could no longer breathe. He held his stomach and sunk to his knees.

Tommy kept kicking him. "Look at this loser, he doesn't even attempt

to defend himself. Probably knows what he was doing was wrong."

"That's enough Tommy", said Steve, "he's had enough.". He turned to Jonathan: "Get up man, I'll give you the camera back."

Relieved, Jonathan quickly got up on his feet. He reached out his hand to the camera. Just as he was about to grab it, Steve let it drop to the floor. Jonathan can still hear the sound of the camera shattering in a thousand pieces. The gang laughed as he fell on his knees and stared at the ground in disbelief. Tears welled up in his eyes. Two years of savings, gone. All gone in a matter of seconds. Steve shoved him aside as the gang left. "Bye loser".

Surprisingly, losing the camera wasn't even the worst part. That was the humiliation of having to go home and explain to his mother what had happened to it. He told her he accidentally dropped it. He could tell she didn't believe him. She knew how careful he was with it. She chose not to press the matter, but in her eyes he could see she knew what had really happened. His cheeks burning red with shame he quickly ran to his room and hid under the blankets, crying, until he had to go to work. Determined not to let his vulnerability show, he wiped his tears and walked out the door with a detached look on his face.

Jonathan sighed as he relived the memory. 'At least there's no way it can get any worse than that'. Will had left on his bike ten minutes ago. Now it was time for Jonathan to leave. Reluctantly he walked to his car and drove away for the first school day of junior year.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Jonathan was in chemistry class for first period. He sat by himself at the back of the class. Since everyone took great care not to be associated with him, the seat beside him was empty. He wasn't surprised and didn't really care. Nobody had ambushed him in the parking lot or in the hallways as he got to school, which was good. 'Maybe this day won't be so bad', he thought to himself.

"May I have everyone's attention please?", asked Mr. Clarke. "We have a new student here today. Please welcome Billy Hargrove, all the way from California." Jonathan looked up and saw a tall, tanned and muscular guy with a blonde mullet and a confident smirk on his face. All the things he could never be. "Since there is only one seat left, you can sit next to Jonathan Byers". Muffled laughing could be heard from all over the room. "Quiet everyone!" warned Mr. Clarke. Billy looked at Jonathan with disdain but walked up to the empty seat anyway.

As Mr. Clarke was writing on the chalkboard with his back to the class, Jonathan could feel the new student staring at him. He was afraid of looking his way.

"What's wrong with you?" whispered Billy mockingly. "Don't you talk? Or make eye contact? Has nobody ever told you that's just rude?"

Jonathan blushed as he looked aside. "I'm just trying to pay attention in class."

"Ah yes, I already took you for a nerd."

"I just think school is import-"

"Shhh", said Billy. "You bore me. I prefer you when you don't talk".

Jonathan looked at him confused.

Billy smirked. "Maybe later you can do something better with that

mouth."

Jonathan looked at him in shock. It was a long time since he heard those words.

"Have I done something wrong daddy?" asked Jonathan. His father often took him to his room to punish him when he did something wrong. Doing something wrong was entirely subjective. When his father was drinking, even the smallest movement could be doing something wrong, depending on his mood. He would then scream at Jonathan and drag him upstairs to his bedroom for a beating. Sometimes his father was tired and he would get off easy. More often, he wouldn't. "Strip", his father would tell him. Shivering with fear he would take off his clothes and put his hands against the wall, his back towards his father. He knew the routine. He heard his father undoing his belt and mentally prepared himself for what he knew was coming. "Count", his father would grumble. Then came the first hit. Jonathan couldn't help but scream when the leather hit his back. "O-one", he would mumble. It would continue until his father thought he was punished enough. He would then leave a bleeding Jonathan to himself. Every time, Jonathan would try to remain quiet, to not scream. At first, he didn't want his father to think he was weak. As he got older, he didn't want to give him the satisfaction of seeing him suffer. Sometimes he would succeed for a few hits. But in the end, he always screamed.

This day, however, was different. His father didn't seem angry at all. He hadn't screamed at him. His mother and Will had left to visit family and his father had been in a good mood all day.

"No son", his father answered, "you haven't done anything wrong today".

"Then why are we going to my bedroom?", asked Jonathan.

"Today we are going to do something different. Something that you cannot tell anyone else about. It will be our little secret. Can you promise me you won't tell?"

Jonathan was confused. He had no idea what it could be. But since his father was so happy, it was probably something good. Maybe he

had bought him a new toy? "I promise", said Jonathan sincerely.

The sound of the bell ringing brought Jonathan's attention back to the classroom. "See ya around", smirked Billy as he walked away. It sounded threatening.

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Billy quickly joined Steve's gang. He'd played Steve in basketball a few times and won every time. He'd shove Steve to the ground and mock how easy it was to dethrone the notorious King Steve. It wasn't long before he had taken over leadership of the gang. Steve wasn't too happy about this. Yet he knew he couldn't dominate the new student. Physically Billy was stronger than anyone in their class. Steve had to choose between losing his friends and his popularity in hopes of finding a new group of friends, or accept being the second man to Billy in his current group. He chose the latter.

Steve was never the guy to take risks. His father could never know his behavior wasn't always perfect. His rule was law at home. At school, Steve had found some relief from that. It's where he had been in charge. It had made him feel good to have power over others. Kids like Jonathan were an easy target. Beating him up or breaking his stuff was an easy way to affirm his leadership among their peers. An easy way to feel powerful. Like Billy now felt powerful over him.

Although Steve frequently broke the rules at school, he always made sure to never get in any serious trouble. He may skip class, and bully other students, but at worst that led to detention. He had always made sure he never went too far. Steve's father owned a successful construction company. As the only child, Steve would succeed him. As long as he didn't screw up too bad. And he had no intention of throwing away his steady, stable future.

Billy, however, seemed to have no such scruples. In his first week of school, he had broken the arm of a freshman student who took just a little too long moving out of Billy's way. He got suspended for a week, but that seemed to make no impression on him at all. Steve had wondered if he wouldn't get into trouble with his parents, but Billy had just laughed it off and called him a pussy for worrying about such things.

Billy seemed to take a special interest in Jonathan Byers. The gang had always harassed him, but under Billy's leadership it seemed to

get only worse. 'Even I have never done anything like this', Steve thought as he, Billy and Tommy waited for Jonathan in the locker room.

Jonathan would only shower after everyone else had left. His father's abuse had left scars on his body that he didn't want anyone to see. They'd only make fun of him even more. He wrapped his towel around his hips and walked out of the shower. He froze as he saw the guys.

"Well well well, what have got here?" smirked Billy. "What are you doing here all alone? Afraid the other guys would make fun of your small pecker?"

Tommy laughed. " Probably afraid he can't hide his boner seeing all those naked guys".

Jonathan had turned bright red. There was no way this confrontation was going to end well for him. He took a few steps back into the showers.

"Hey hey, don't go anywhere now", Billy said mockingly. "We were just thinking, it isn't right for you to hide like that. Peeping on others but staying hidden yourself." Billy turned around to Tommy and Steve. "Don't you think it's about time that Byers showed himself?"

Tommy laughed: "Yeah, that's right!"

Steve kept quiet. He felt this might be taking it a bit too far.

"What is it Harrington? Having second thoughts? It almost seems like you want to protect the little queer. Are you in love with him or something?" Billy mocked.

"Of course not", Steve hastened to say.

"Good. Then you can take off his towel." Billy stated.

Steve hesitated. He really didn't have a choice. He stepped forward towards Jonathan.

"Please don't-"

"Don't. You'll only make it worse", whispered Steve. In a swift move he pulled of the towel and threw it in a corner. Jonathan desperately tried to cover himself. "Happy now?" asked Steve.

"Not entirely", Billy answered with a smile. He turned to Jonathan. "I can't see anything with those hands covering you. Move them away."

Jonathan stood there frozen. He had no idea what to do.

"Can't you hear me?" The mocking tone had completely disappeared from Billy's voice and was replaced by something much more sinister. "Move those hands or I'll move them for you."

Jonathan knew he had no choice but to obey. He didn't stand a chance fighting off three guys. He probably couldn't even take one. Reluctantly he brought his hands to his sides.

"That's a good boy". The sarcasm had returned to Billy's voice.

Jonathan kept his eyes fixated on the ground. He felt his heart beating in his throat.

"I'm gonna need to see the full picture", Billy decided. "Turn around. Come on, give us a good look."

Jonathan hesitated a moment before he obeyed. There was nothing he could do to stop them. He knew this feeling of powerlessness all too well from his childhood. He had learned to just give his father what he wanted. No fighting, no protesting. It was no use. It only resulted in more pain. It was best to submit and pray it would be over soon.

Billy raised his eyebrow. "Damn Byers, it looks like somebody got to you before I could".

Jonathan's back was completely covered in scars. The white marks overlapped and formed a disordered pattern. Steve gasped. He had never seen anything like that before. He wondered how Jonathan got those scars. Although he and his gang had not exactly been kind to him over the years, they certainly hadn't caused this.

"Wow dude, are you in some sick kinda cult or something? What the

fuck is this?" Tommy blurted out.

Jonathan tried his best to hold back his tears. He turned around to the group and tried to compose his voice. "May I please leave?"

"Yeah man you got it." Steve said quickly. "Get the hell out."

Jonathan put on his clothes as fast as he could and ran out of the locker room. Tommy stared at Steve in pure disbelief. Billy calmly walked up to Steve, grabbed him by the collar and held him up against the lockers. "Don't ever undermine me again. Next time it won't end so well for you."

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Jonathan quickly walked to his car, holding his head down and trying to avoid any eye contact. He felt that if anyone looked him in the eyes now, they'd know what had just happened to him. So far he had managed to avoid everyone. Just a few more steps.

'Hey Byers, wait up!' Jonathan froze. In a split second he considered running to his car and driving off, but decided he wouldn't make it.

Steve had caught up to him. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

Jonathan turned around. Whatever he had expected to hear, it wasn't that.

"What is wrong with me? How do you mean what's wrong with me?"

Steve sounded angry: "Why don't you stand up for yourself? Every day you are targeted and every day you just let it happen. It's pathetic really."

Jonathan felt resentment welling up inside him.

"Since when do you care about what happens to me? As long as you and your friends can play your little games with me, why should you care how I act?"

Steve was taken aback by this sudden fierceness. "I don't care what happens to you", he quickly recovered. "It just makes me sick to watch it. Just fight back, man. Fucking man up."

Jonathan scoffed. "Thanks for the great advice. What would I do without it?" He got in his car and drove off.

Dumbfounded, Steve watched the car as it got further and further away. He had no idea what reaction he had expected. After the events in the locker room, he had suddenly had the urge to confront him. To talk some sense into him. That stuff with the towel; Billy had just been testing the waters. If Jonathan was going to just let these

things happen, Billy was only going to take it further and further. He had to start protecting himself. But Jonathan was right, Steve thought. Why did he suddenly care? He'd tormented him for years. Why was it a problem now that Billy was doing it? Steve quickly brushed his thoughts off. He didn't care about Jonathan, he was just trying to do a good deed for once. Reassured, he walked to his car.

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Billy got home from school. He was lucky today, his father wasn't home. As long as his father was gone, Billy could do what he wanted. His stepmother and stepsister cowered in fear for him. However, when his father was home, Billy was the one cowering in fear. He could still feel the bruises from three days ago. It's when he had gotten home 5 minutes past curfew. Billy couldn't wait to leave the house. He'd often think about being the head of his own house. His rule, not his father's, would be law there. He'd rule with an iron fist.

He lay down on his bed and smirked as he thought of the events in the locker room earlier today. Seeing Jonathan standing there, naked and vulnerable, completely surrendered to his will: that was something completely different. He had never experienced anything like this before, anything this arousing.

Of course, Billy had been with plenty of girls. He was a good looking guy and girls threw themselves at him willingly. After a while, he had started to grow bored of that. It was too easy. He wanted to be challenged. He wanted someone to put up a fight. He wanted to slowly break someone's resistance until they submit to him and obeyed his every command. He had to feel in control, to feel complete power over someone. Only then did he find true pleasure.

Billy knew what he wanted. The problem was, he'd had no idea how to get it. That was, until he met Jonathan Byers. He had never thought about boys that way before, but it suddenly made complete sense to him. No boy would throw himself at him as girls always had. They wouldn't want to be known as queer. It'd be much more of a challenge. When he saw Jonathan, he immediately knew he was perfect for his purposes. He was cute enough, skinny with messy, dark blonde hair. Everything about him screamed outcast: his old, worn-down clothes betrayed his poor background. The seat next to him being the last empty seat left indicated his friendless status. That was perfect: no one would try to protect him and mess with Billy's plans.

'Unlike his brother', Billy thought. He had met Will a couple of times in the Hargrove house, as he was friends with his sister Max. Nerdy kid, sure, but he wasn't socially isolated like his brother. Billy had made sure to get to know a few things about Jonathan's background and family. He never knew when it might come in handy. He'd found out he was correct about him being from a poor family. His deadbeat father had left the family when Jonathan was 12, leaving Jonathan to be the man of the house. He'd fulfilled the role with verve, financially supporting his mother and being very, very protective of his little brother...

The most important thing Billy had noticed about Jonathan had been his behavior. From the moment Billy had walked up to him he had felt his fear. Jonathan couldn't even look at him. It had turned him on like nothing else ever had. Since that first moment in chemistry class the Byers boy hadn't left his fantasies. He felt himself getting hard as he thought about Jonathan stripping for him, unwilling and blushing. Billy began to stroke himself. He imagined Jonathan getting on his knees for him, begging him not to make him do this. The strokes got faster and faster. Tears streamed down Jonathan's face as he reluctantly opened his mouth at Billy's command. Billy unzipped his pants and...

He sighed of relief and tried to catch his breath. He wasn't happy he had come so soon. The fantasy was just getting to the good part. 'Soon', he thought, 'soon it won't be just a fantasy.'

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Jonathan closed the toilet lid and sat down with his lunch tray on his lap. Since freshman year this secluded bathroom at the west wing of the school had been his designated lunch spot. He didn't have anyone to sit with in cafeteria. This place had saved him the embarrassment of sitting on his own in view of everyone. It also got him some precious alone time. Nobody ever visited this particular bathroom, especially during lunchtime. He'd often listen to music or just sit there and think. It was the best part of the school day for him.

He couldn't stop thinking about his confrontation with Steve. What was that guy's problem? He had been telling Jonathan to stand up for himself. It had really made him angry. If only it was so easy. But Steve wouldn't know that. Steve had always been at the top of the food chain at school. He was the predator, not the prey. What would he know about standing up to people much stronger, much more powerful than him?

Besides angry, Steve's words had also left him confused. Why would Steve suddenly want to advise him about dealing with bullies? He had been Jonathan's main bully for years. But now it almost felt like he was trying to...protect him. Jonathan blushed at the thought. Ever since freshman years he had been attracted to Steve. He'd always taken great care to hide it. Everyone already thought he was queer and not a day went by that Steve and his gang didn't remind him of that. But if Steve ever found out Jonathan was in love with him? He'd murder him, Jonathan was sure of that.

Besides that, he was ashamed of it. Being gay was wrong, it was dirty. Everybody knew that. But to be in love with your tormentor on top of that? That just added insult to injury. Jonathan couldn't understand why that had to happen to him. It only served to increase his self-hatred. How could he love someone that treated him like dirt? It was probably because through the years, he had come to believe himself that he was worth even less than dirt.

The sound of the bathroom door opening instantly awakened him

from his thoughts. 'Who would come here during lunchbreak?' He thought to himself. His eyes opened wide in shock. 'Whoever it is, they are probably here for me.' Quickly he extended his hand to lock the door. As he reached it, it was swiftly pulled away from him. Jonathan looked up and froze in fear.

Billy stood in the doorway, nonchalantly blocking Jonathan's only exit. "Hey there fairy boy," Billy smiled down on him with contempt. "What are you doing here all by yourself?". Jonathan felt panic taking control of him. He was ambushed. Billy must have been following him around, getting to know his routine. He knew there was no one within hearing distance from here and there wouldn't be for another 20 minutes. He had to find a way out. "Actually I was just having lunch, but I'm done now. So if you'll excuse me I'll be going." Jonathan got up as nonchalantly as he could and tried to walk past Billy. Billy did not move an inch aside. "Excuse me, I'd like to pass", Jonathan tried again. A smirk appeared on Billy's face. "And leave me so soon? I didn't think so." Billy put his hand on Jonathan's shoulder. "Since we've established that you're not going anywhere, be a good boy and step back."

Jonathan started to feel rebellious. Steve's words had inspired something in him. Why should he just passively accept everything Billy and his friends think to put him through? Why should he not stand up for himself for a change? Jonathan looked up to Billy determinately. " And what if I don't?"

Billy's face lit up. This was even better than he expected. "Because if you don't", he stated casually, "I will do it myself. You won't like it when I do it myself." Jonathan felt his confidence growing. There was no way he was backing down now. He braced himself for what he knew was coming. "Try me."

Billy did not have to hear that twice. He grabbed the smaller boy by his collar and shoved him backwards at full strength. He was thrown backwards over the toilet and hit his head on the back wall. Jonathan screamed in pain. He felt dizzy and his vision was blurry, yet he was keenly aware of stinging pain in his right arm. 'It must be broken', he thought to himself. Jonathan did not have much time to recover until he felt himself being lifted up by his shirt. The fist hit his face at full strength before he even saw it coming.

When he regained his vision, he found himself sitting on his knees, Billy's crotch less than an inch removed from his face. He flinched as he became aware of the pain in his arm and nose. He looked up at Billy.

"Unzip my pants", the older boy instructed matter-of-factly.

Jonathan winced. He knew what was going to happen. It had happened to him many times before when he was younger. He had two choices now. Obey and be violated, or fight and be killed. Jonathan composed himself. Too many times had he chosen option one. Too many times had he allowed others to use him as they wished. It had to end now. He lifted his head and looked Billy dead in the eyes.

"No."

The room was quiet for a second. Then Billy started laughing. "Damn boy, you must get off on pain." He shrugged his shoulders. "I would gladly beat you until every thought of resistance has left your puny body, but the truth is, I like you pretty. So I won't do that."

Jonathan looked up in surprise. "So you're just going to let me go?"

Billy smiled. "Yes, you could choose to go. But I wouldn't recommend it if I were you."

Jonathan became suspicious. "Why is that?"

"Well the thing is," Billy smirked, "that I'm all ready for action now. If you're not going to deliver, than someone has to."

Jonathan's eyes widened as the implication hit him.

"But where would I find someone else so quickly?", Billy continued. "Well, as it happens, luck is on my side. The perfect person for the job happens to be in my house at this very moment. Playing with his friend, my sister Max.

Billy looked down triumphantly. He knew he had won.

Jonathan was shocked. This couldn't be happening again.

"No." Jonathan had turned away from the bed and was facing his father directly. Tears welled up in his eyes. "No, I can't do this anymore. It has to end, now". His father seemed taken aback. Jonathan had never resisted before. He knew it was pointless. But then, he had just been a little kid. He was 11 now, almost a teenager. He wasn't weak and helpless anymore.

His father composed himself. "Well, okay then son. If that's what you want, than that's what we'll do."

Jonathan looked up in surprise. He had expected anger. He had expected violence. And he had prepared himself for that. For hours he had been practicing in front of the mirror. He had been playing all the possible scenarios in his head. He had practiced staying determined through all the possible abuse his father could hurl at him. But he had not prepared for this.

"So...I can leave now?" he asked clumsily.

"Yes you can", responded Lonnie. "But there will be consequences."

Jonathan looked at him, not understanding.

"You see, if you refuse to do your part in this house, someone else will have to do it", Lonnie continued. "Luckily for you, there are possibilities for that. Your little brother could do what you won't."

Jonathan looked at him in shock. He could not be serious. He couldn't mean Will, he just couldn't. Sweet, innocent Will, whom Jonathan always tried so hard to protect.

"He probably won't be too happy about that. But hey, it is your choice. You have to make it."

Jonathan knew he had no choice. He had to protect Will, he just had to. He was Will's older brother, it was his job. No one else was going to do it.

He wiped the tears from his eyes. "No, I'll do it." Defeated he walked back to the bed, silent tears streaming down his face.

Today he knew he had no choice again. He had to protect Will, that

was still his job. It would always be. Jonathan looked up, resentful, tears streaming down his face. "As you wish", he said bleakly.

Billy smiled triumphantly. "Now that's a good boy." He took off his belt. "In case you get any ideas of resisting again". Jonathan screamed in agony as Billy pulled his broken arm behind his back. He tied his wrists together so tight Jonathan could feel his blood flow being restricted.

Billy positioned himself in front of Jonathan again and put down his pants. Jonathan winced as he saw Billy's size. No way that was going to fit in his mouth. Billy smiled, almost as if he could read Jonathan's thoughts. "Don't worry princess. It will fit, one way or another. Now, open wide." Hesitating, Jonathan slowly opened his mouth. Billy did not waste any time. Jonathan gagged as Billy grabbed the back of his head and pressed his member deep down his throat at full force. However, he adjusted quickly. He was used to this. "Ah, no gag reflex", Billy smirked, "looks like everyone's right, you are a faggot." His thrusts became harder, faster, deeper. Billy smiled as he saw Jonathan's increasing struggle to breathe between thrusts. He decided to push him even further. He thrust himself down the smaller boy's throat again and then held his head in position, choking him with his full length. Jonathan's face became increasingly red. He tried to wriggle his hands loose, to no avail. Tears welled up in his eyes as he looked up, pleading. He tried to beg Billy to let him breathe, but he couldn't make a sound. Billy tried to maintain his position longer, but Jonathan's begging eyes sent him over the edge. He groaned as he quickly withdrew and released his load on Jonathan's face.

Jonathan fell on the floor, desperately gasping for air. Billy leaned against the bathroom door, exhausted and completely satisfied. He had succeeded in his mission. He had broken Jonathan Byers. Filled with disgust, he looked at the weakened creature on the floor. The moment he came, he had lost all interest in the other boy. As far as he was concerned, he wasn't even human. Just a means to an end. Casually, he put his clothes back on. Jonathan did not react as Billy released his arms in order to take back his belt. They slid to the floor, completely limp.

The bell rang. Lunchbreak had ended. Casually, Billy strolled out of

the bathroom to his next class, leaving a broken Jonathan behind.

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Steve looked over his shoulder to the back row. 'Empty', he thought. 'This is nothing like Jonathan. He always shows up to class, he cares too much about his grades to skip.' Steve blushed. He had been thinking about Jonathan a lot lately. Next to the empty seat, he saw Billy sitting back, smiling. 'He looks positively gloating', Steve observed. His eyes widened. Would Billy have done something to Jonathan? If so, he had to find Jonathan. NOW. Impatiently he looked at the clock. Ten more minutes until class ended. The longest ten minutes of his life.

As soon as the bell rang, Steve sprinted out of class. After a few steps he stopped. He didn't actually have any idea where to look. He turned around and determinately walked up to Billy.

"Where is he?"

Billy innocently tilted his head. "I have no idea what you're going on about."

"You know damn well what I mean, Hargrove", Steve growled. "Where is Jonathan Byers?"

Billy's eyes lit up. "Ah, you mean your boyfriend. You'll find him at the west wing bathrooms. Though you won't enjoy him much I'm afraid, now that I'm done with him."

Steve looked at him in shock.

"Sorry to have to tell you this, but he's used goods now", a smirking Billy continued.

Steve clenched his fists. He could barely contain his anger. But killing Billy could wait: he had more important things to do first. "I'm not finished with you yet", Steve scowled, before he turned around and ran off to the west wing.

"Jonathan!" Steve turned pale as he saw the state Jonathan was in.

He knelt beside him and lifted him up to a sitting position. Jonathan slowly came to his senses. "What did he do to you?" Steve asked softly.

Jonathan scoffed. "Don't act like you care. Did he send you to finish the job? Just take what you want and get it over with."

Steve didn't know how to respond. The accusation had hurt him. Suddenly he noticed the white smudges around Jonathan's mouth. He gasped. "Did he-

Jonathan looked at the floor and nodded silently.

"Oh man. I'm so sorry that happened to you." Steve looked at Jonathan's mangled arm and nose. "We need to get you to a doctor, now. That is not looking good."

Jonathan instantly turned his gaze towards Steve. "Please don't call a doctor. Please don't call anyone. Nobody can know this happened to me."

Steve looked at Jonathan in surprise. "You can't be serious. Your arm is broken, your nose is broken. That's going to need medical attention. How did you plan on hiding a broken arm anyway?"

Jonathan realized he was right. It was impossible. He sobbed: "I d-don't know. I-it's just, I'm so a-ashamed of what h-happened."

It broke Steve's heart to see Jonathan like this. He lowered his back against the bathroom door and sat down next to him. Hesitating, he put his arm around the crying boy's shoulders. "It's going to be okay man. We're going to figure something out."

Together, they sat like that in silence for a few minutes. Each cherished the strange and unprecedented moment of intimacy. Suddenly Steve broke the silence. "What if we'll just say you were beaten up. We don't have to tell anyone about the...other part. We'll just clean you up a bit before we leave and then nobody has to know."

Jonathan nodded. It was probably the best course of action now.

Steve got up and walked to the sink. He didn't see anything he could use to clean with, so he took off his shirt and held it under the tap. He knelt by Jonathan's side and gently brought the shirt to his face.

"Stop", whispered Jonathan. "You don't have to get your shirt dirty for me. It was probably expensive and...I just don't want to ruin it. Besides," he continued in a softer voice, "I can't afford to pay you back for it." Steve tilted his head. "The shirt's what you're worried about now? After all that happened? Don't worry man, you owe me nothing. Now, sit still so I can clean you up."

Jonathan relaxed a little as Steve softly blotted his lips with the shirt. He was so close now he could feel him breathing. For a moment he allowed himself to enjoy the other boy's closeness.

"That's better now", Steve smiled as he got up and extended his hand. "Come, let me help you up. Let's go to the school nurse."

'Luckily there's no one in the hallways at this time', Steve thought to himself, 'because otherwise we'd get a lot of strange looks right now.' It was an unusual sight. The shirtless captain of the basketball team, supporting on his shoulder the injured school loner. He grinned as he imagined the rumors this scene would spark.

As expected, the school nurse referred Jonathan to the hospital. She offered to call his mom, but Jonathan had declined. He didn't want to bother her at work. The nurse had asked him who did this to him. Jonathan had already started to say that he didn't see, as Steve interrupted him. "It was Billy Hargrove", he had calmly stated. It was about time that son of a bitch was going to pay for his crimes.

"So if your mom is not going to drive you to the hospital, how did you intend to get there? You can't possibly drive there yourself in this condition.", Steve jested as they left the nurse's office.

Jonathan did not pick up on his light tone. "It's no problem, I can walk there. I'm used to it. I often walk to school when I don't have money for gas."

Steve stopped mid-step and stared at Jonathan in disbelief. "You didn't seriously think I was going to let you walk five miles in the

cold? In your condition? No way. You're driving with me."

Jonathan blushed at the other boy's kindness. "Thank you", he said softly.

In response, Steve pulled him in a little closer. "No problem. No problem at all."

8. Chapter 8

Chapter 8

Steve walked out of the school building. He had just finished basketball practice. It was the first time he had actually enjoyed it since the beginning of the school year. Now that Billy had been suspended for attacking Jonathan, the team dynamics were back to normal again. He was the unchallenged captain again. He slowed his pace as he entered the parking lot. Someone was sitting on the hood of his car. Could that be...?

"Finally Harrington. I've been waiting here half an hour now. Took your time in the showers?"

Steve stared directly in the face of his worst enemy. Billy looked as if he had been in a fight. His right eye was black and his lip was swollen.

"Well here I am, don't cream your pants", Steve shot back. He felt himself becoming irate as he thought of the torture Billy had put Jonathan through. "Now remove yourself from my car before I run you over."

Billy smirked. "I'm not going anywhere, not until I am done with you. You see, you and Byers' tattling has gotten me suspended. As you can imagine, that has gotten me into some...trouble at home", he said as he pointed towards his face. "As you very well know by now, I don't take kindly to people who cause me trouble. " With every word he spoke, his voice became more sinister. "Perhaps it's time you joined your boyfriend in the hospital." He got off the car and positioned himself no more than an inch away from Steve, looming over him threateningly.

Steve snapped. He was done with Billy and his threats. "You want to fight, Hargrove? Fight me. I'm warning you, it won't be me needing the hospital", Steve growled.

The first swing took Billy by surprise. It hit him in the cheek with full force. It was quiet for a moment as Billy stared at Steve in surprise.

He laughed maniacally as he tasted the blood. "So you do have some strength in you! Now I finally meet the famous king Steve! Come on Harrington, give me some more. I want to see what you can do!" He opened his arms and looked at Steve invitingly.

Steve did not have to hear this twice. He came at Billy with full strength.

Billy kept laughing as Steve beat his face to a bloody pulp. "Ok, that's enough Harrington. Not bad, not bad at all. Now it's my turn." With one push he shoved Steve to the ground. His vision blurred as his head hit the pavement. As his sight started to clear up again he saw Billy jumping on top of him. He pinned his arms to the ground by placing his knees on Steve's wrists and began to punch his face methodically. Left, right, left, right.

Steve felt completely disoriented. He could feel the hits coming in, but he didn't feel any pain. He couldn't move. 'I'm losing', he thought as he felt his strength and consciousness waning. 'I'm going to die here on this pavement.' Suddenly the image of Jonathan sprang to his mind. Beautiful, kind Jonathan, lying on the floor of the bathroom stall. Broken both in spirit and bones, just because this utter scum decided it would please him. Who did he think he was, making decisions of life and death? With every thought his mind became clearer, his focus stronger, his strength vaster. He opened his eyes, pulled his arm loose and with one swift punch threw Billy back on the ground. Steve had lost all control. He dived on top of Billy and kept throwing punches, completely unaware of his surroundings. In his rage the world consisted only of his fists and Billy's face.

Slowly he began to get tired and started to come back to his senses. He looked at Billy's face. It was completely covered in blood, as were his own hands. Both boys were breathing heavily. Steve grabbed Billy by his collar and calmly stated: "If you ever so much as look at Jonathan again, you won't make it out alive next time." He got up as well as he could and stumbled to his car, leaving a defeated Billy behind.

9. Chapter 9

Chapter 9

'It hurts more than I thought', Steve thought as he drove away from school. He slowly started to come back to his senses after the fight with Billy. 'I have to go see Jonathan, tell him what happened'. Their last exchange yesterday evening had been kind of weird. Steve had dropped Jonathan off at home after their hospital visit. He felt like they were really starting to connect. But as they got closer to the Byers residence, Jonathan started to crawl back into his shell. Steve had offered to walk Jonathan to the front door, but he had frantically refused. He really didn't want Steve to come in. It was like he was hiding something. Steve hit the brakes and put his car in the grass. He had reached Jonathan's home.

"Oh my God! What happened to you?" Steve was greeted at the door by small, slender brunette who looked at him in shock.

'That must be Jonathan's mom', Steve thought to himself. 'He looks quite like her.'

"Hello Mrs. Byers", Steve greeted as lightheartedly as possible. "My name is Steve Harrington. I'm a...friend of Jonathan's", he improvised. Were they even friends? "I got into a bit of a fight this afternoon, but it's not a big deal really. Is Jonathan home?"

"He is, actually. Since you are his friend, do you know what happened to him yesterday? He came home last night with a broken arm and nose and he won't tell me anything. It's like I don't even know what's going on in his life anymore." Joyce's voice had broken.

'That poor woman', Steve thought. 'It must break her heart, not knowing what's going on with her son.'

"I do know what happened, in fact. But", he continued, "I'm afraid it's not up to me to tell. I wouldn't want to betray Jonathan's trust like that, by going behind his back." He put his hand on Joyce's arm. "But I'll try to convince him to open up to you."

Joyce wiped her tears. "Thank you", she said in a soft voice. "He's in his bedroom. Up the stairs, second door to the right."

Jonathan heard three knocks on his door. "Since when do you knock, mom? Normally you just walk right in." The door opened slowly. Jonathan's eyes widened in shock as he realized who was standing behind it. "St-teve...what are you doing here? And what happened to you?"

Steve grinned. "Billy happened to me." As he saw the look of horror on Jonathan's face, he quickly continued: "don't worry, I got him even better than he got me. You will never have to worry about him bothering you again." He looked around the room. It was messy; there were clothes all over the floor. On the wall were posters of The Clash and Evil Dead. "Can I sit down?" Jonathan nodded. "You can sit here on the bed", he said as he moved aside to make room. Steve sat down next to Jonathan. Both boys blushed as they realized how close to each other they were.

"I came here today to apologize", Steve began.

"You've got nothing to-"

"No, in fact, I do", Steve interrupted. "And I'm going to." He cleared his throat, unsure of how to continue. "For years, I have put you through all sorts of abuse. I've beaten you, mocked you, and humiliated you. And I'm really, really sorry for that. I was a coward. My father...he puts so much pressure on me. I have to be the perfect son. I have to be the one that succeeds him. At school I needed to escape the pressure. And I did that by taking it out on you. And for so long, I didn't see any problem with that. Breaking your camera, even taking your towel off..." Tears started welling up in Steve's eyes. "I thought everything worked perfectly. I got to blow off steam and my father was still proud of me. I didn't think at all about how you felt. All I cared about was my father's opinion, my future." He looked directly at Jonathan. "But that was before I got to know you. Before I realized what a beautiful person you are." Steve paused for a moment. "Today Billy was waiting for me in the parking lot. He was furious that I had told the school nurse that he caused your injuries and got him suspended. He wanted to put me in the hospital, like he did to you." Steve looked at Jonathan. "You know how strong he is,

much stronger than me. And he was winning. He had me on the floor and he was punching my face and I thought I was going to die right then and there. But then I thought of you. I thought of what he did to you in that bathroom stall and it made me so angry, so incredibly angry. And all that anger balling up inside me just gave me so much strength. It was exactly what I needed to get back into the fight. So I pushed him over and I just kept punching him. I didn't even know what I was doing anymore. Until I came back to my senses and saw that I had won. I had actually won a fight against Billy. And it was all because of you."

Jonathan blushed. He couldn't believe this was really happening. Steve Harrington actually cared about him. Steve Harrington won a fight for him! He turned towards the other boy. "Thank you, that means a lot to me." He looked at Steve's face. "Though I have to say", he grinned, "you look absolutely terrible".

Steve mockingly acted insulted. "Well look who's talking. You're not looking all that pretty yourself." Both boys laughed at their shared physical state.

"Let me at least get a cloth to remove the blood for you", Jonathan said, serious again. "You did the same for me."

Steve nodded and Jonathan quickly returned with clean cloth. "Here, let me get that", Jonathan said softly as he leaned closely over Steve and carefully blotted the blood on Steve's face. Steve couldn't take it anymore. Jonathan, beautiful Jonathan, standing so close to him. Touching him even! He couldn't control himself any longer. He grabbed Jonathan by the hips and pulled him on his lap.

Jonathan turned bright red. "W-what are you doing?"

Steve looked Jonathan in the eyes. "Kissing you", he said softly. "If...if that's okay with you?"

Jonathan nodded shyly. For years he had been dreaming that this moment would come.

Steve leaned in closer and pressed his lips against Jonathan's. Carefully he pushed his tongue in the other boy's mouth. He grew

more confident as he felt Jonathan submitting to his movements. His movements became more frantic and before he knew it he had slipped a hand underneath Jonathan's shirt.

Jonathan froze as he felt his lover's fingers caressing the scars on his back. Steve immediately stopped as he felt Jonathan's tense response to his touching. "I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have done that."

Jonathan stared at the floor in shame. "No, it's not your fault. It's mine. I'm the one who reacts so strangely. I completely understand if you don't have the patience to deal with me and my weird hang-ups." He stood up from Steve's lap.

Steve immediately pulled him back. "What are you talking about? I want you, only you. And I have all the patience in the world with you." He shot Jonathan a sly grin. " We could even wait 'till marriage if you want to."

Jonathan smiled back shyly. "Are you really sure?"

"More sure than I've ever been about anything in my life." Steve paused for a moment. "Those scars on your back...I've noticed them before in the locker room. How did you get them?" As he saw Jonathan's face darken, he hastened to add: "you don't have to tell me if you don't want to."

10. Chapter 10

Chapter 10

Jonathan hesitated. He had never told anyone about his scars before. Could he really trust Steve? He had never felt so safe and cherished with anyone before as he now did with Steve. He could feel his heart beat rising. His anxiety and tension had reached peak levels. He wanted to try.

"I....I...."

He couldn't speak. His words were stuck in his throat and with all the resolve he could muster he still couldn't get them out. "I...I'm sorry. I want to, but I just can't. I literally can't." Silent tears rolled over his cheeks.

Steve softly stroked his hair. "That's okay. We have all the time in the world." Gently, he wiped Jonathan's tears away. "Come, let's get comfortable." Steve pulled his lover into a tight embrace as they lay down on the bed. Minutes passed as they lay down in silence, each engrossed in their own thoughts and feeling relaxed and safe in each other's company.

"It was my father."

Steve was startled as Jonathan suddenly spoke up. He managed to control his reaction, in order not to upset Jonathan and cause him to crawl back into his shell again. He didn't say a word as he softly stroked his lover's arm in encouragement.

"He...he drank a lot. And when he did...", Jonathan continued hesitantly, "...he got violent. He always took it out on me, fortunately never on Will. He would get angry over the smallest things. Then he'd drag me upstairs to my bedroom and beat me. Sometimes with his bare hands, but often with his belt. It went on for years, multiple times a week, until he left us when I was 12." Jonathan paused for a moment and wiped his tears away. "I always tried to be good, so it wouldn't happen. I was quiet, didn't get in the way, did all my chores immediately without having to be reminded, studied hard in school

to get good grades. I did everything I could to be a good son, but I never managed to avoid his anger. No matter what I did, I was never good enough. I just wasn't what he wanted in a son. I was never good at sports; I was never going to be captain of the football team like he was in high school. I was never even going to make the football team. I was terrible at hunting; I couldn't get myself to shoot a rabbit no matter how much he screamed at me. I was a complete failure in his eyes. And I guess he was right, I am a failure. I have no friends, I have accomplished nothing..." Jonathan choked up.

Steve tightened his embrace, careful not to hurt the other boy's arm. 'Hey now, that's not true. You're not a failure. Just look at all you do for your family! You work extra shifts to help your mom pay the bills. You are practically raising your little brother. And you do have talents! There is more to life than sports', he grinned, "although I almost can't believe I just said that. You are creative! You do photography, don't you?" A flash of guilt came over him. "Or at least you did, until I broke your camera...Oh Jonathan I am so sorry. None of this was your fault. Your father was an asshole...and so was I. Please don't think any of this was your fault."

Jonathan snuggled up to Steve. He couldn't quite believe him yet about it not being his fault. But he felt that Steve genuinely meant it. He felt safe with Steve, like he had never felt with anyone else before. For so long he had kept his childhood trauma to himself. Now that he had finally found someone he could share it with, he couldn't stop anymore. The stream of words just kept flowing.

"Actually there is more. At first he only beat me. But after a while... he did more. Like what Billy did...you understand?" Jonathan couldn't bring himself to actually say it out loud.

Steve nodded at him, shocked. He understood.

"He said it would be our little secret", Jonathan continued. "He said bad things would happen if I ever told anyone. He said my mother and brother would get hurt. And I was so young and naïve, I actually believed him. I was actually stupid enough to believe him.", Jonathan sobbed. "I thought, it must be my fault. He is punishing me because I did something wrong. If I just try to be better, it won't happen again. So I did everything he said and hoped that my good behavior would

make it stop. But it never did." Jonathan paused for a moment. "But then, a few weeks before I turned 12, I was just done. I couldn't take it anymore. So I told him it had to stop. I had actually practiced for the moment for hours beforehand. I was prepared for a fight. I was expecting him to be furious, to beat me for disobeying him. But he didn't do any of that. He stayed very calm. And he just said: "Well, okay then son. If that's what you want, than that's what we'll do."

Jonathan had to stop as he choked up again. But this time he wasn't going to let it stop him. He had started telling his story and he was going to finish it. "I was so relieved. But suspicious at the same time. I couldn't believe it was so easy. And I was right. He said that if I wasn't going to do my part around the house, Will would have to do it. And I just couldn't let that happen. Will is my little brother, I had to protect him. So I chose to stay. To me this is the worst thing of it all. I always had a choice. In all those years, I could've chosen to tell my mother at any moment, but I never did. I could've chosen to walk away, in that one moment of confrontation, but I didn't. How could it not be my fault if I made the choice myself? And to make things worse, a few weeks after I confronted my father, he left our family for good. That can't have been a coincidence. It must've been because of me. So not only did I do nothing to stop his abuse, I also caused my parents' marriage to fail. I could never bring myself to tell my mom, not even after he left. I knew she wouldn't be angry, I was just so ashamed that I was the reason everything was going downhill with our family. So I never told anyone anything. Except for you now."

The room was dead silent for a few minutes. Steve had no idea how to respond to everything he had just heard. He couldn't fathom the horrors Jonathan had gone through as a child. And his beliefs were so off! How could he think any of this was his fault? While it was so abundantly clear that it was his scumbag father's. He softly caressed Jonathan's cheek. "I have no idea what to say...I can't possibly imagine how it must have been for you growing up. But I do know one thing. That none of this was your fault. You never had a choice, he just made it seem like you did. He knew you were going to protect Will. He knew you had to fulfil the role of a father for Will, since he himself never did. He knew that fully well when he gave you that 'choice'. Believe me, that's not a choice. That's blackmail. Manipulative mind games to keep you in check. He knew you

couldn't defend yourself against that. You were only eleven! Please don't feel guilty over this. You did everything you could."

Jonathan smiled. He felt consoled and comforted by Steve's heartfelt words. "So...you haven't changed your mind about me?" He asked shyly.

Steve grinned as he turned his lover around. They were facing each other, barely an inch of distance between them. "I certainly haven't. Have you?" he asked playfully. Jonathan quickly shook his head.

Steve smiled. "Good", he said, as he pulled Jonathan in for another kiss.

"You know, there is one more thing I want to say", Steve said as they lay together on the bed, recovering from everything that had happened the hours before. "Your mother is really worried about you. Now that you have opened up to me, I hope you can find the strength to open up to her as well. She really cares a lot about you. I think it could help you both if she knew."

Jonathan nodded pensively. "I'll try."

"Good". Steve rustled his lover's hair. "I have to go. It's already past my curfew, my parents will kill me if I don't come home soon now. Take care, I'll see you at school tomorrow." He planted a final kiss on his lover's forehead before walking out.

After Jonathan closed the door behind Steve, he walked up to the living room. He sat beside his mother on the couch and looked her in the eyes. "We need to talk."

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11

Jonathan looked at the seat beside him. Empty. After Billy's fight at the parking lot with Steve his temporary suspension had been converted into a permanent expulsion. Jonathan was relieved to say the least. Things were really starting to improve for him. Last night he had opened up to his mom and told her everything. It felt like a load had been lifted of his shoulders. They had hugged and cried and the words she said still resounded in his head: "you think you're all alone in the world, and that you have to carry the weight of the whole world on your shoulders, but you're not Jonathan! You're not." She had said she'd always be there for him. And like Steve, she'd said that none of the things that had happened were his fault. He still found it hard to believe, but had started to consider that they might be right. He was still a little kid at the time. And he would never consider it being Will's fault, had those things happened to him. So why the double standard when it came to himself?

Even his boss and co-workers had been unexpectedly nice to him. Jonathan had been so sure he was going to be fired now that he couldn't work for at least six weeks due to his arm. But his boss had been really sympathetic. Wished him a speedy recovery and told him to call in when he was able to work again. And his co-workers had sent him flowers with a nice get-well-soon card, signed by all of them. It had really taken him by surprise. He had assumed they didn't like him, since they never talked to him much. Looking back, they were never outright mean to him. Maybe they had just assumed he preferred to be left alone? 'Maybe I just pushed them away with my quiet and avoidant behavior', he thought.

The sound of the bell ringing quickly put an end to his thoughts. Lunch time. Suddenly worries crept up on him. He hadn't seen Steve yet today. Which made sense: they didn't have any classes together in the morning. But still, what if Steve had changed his mind? What if the affection was only for in private? What if he was embarrassed to be seen with Jonathan in front of his friends? He didn't know what to do next. He could go to the cafeteria for lunch, but then there was

the risk of sitting alone and being made fun of. He could go have lunch in the bathrooms as usual, but he really didn't want to go back there after what Billy did. He decided to go to the cafeteria. He trusted that Steve meant what he said and would be there for him.

At the cafeteria, he sat down alone at a table in the back. No sight of Steve yet. Suddenly, he noticed two girls walking towards him. He recognized one of them as Nancy Wheeler, sister of Will's friend Mike. They had been classmates since elementary school, but had never really spoken before, except the occasional exchange of a few words during class assignments, or when he was picking up Will from the Wheeler residence. The other girl was her best friend, Barb. He wondered what they wanted from him.

"Hi Jonathan", Nancy spoke.

"H-hi." Jonathan looked at the girls expectantly.

"You know, Billy has been spreading rumors about what happened in the bathroom with you that day."

Jonathan turned bright red.

"He says that he went in there to use the bathroom, and found you waiting for him there", Nancy continued. "He said you offered to blow him 'like some faggot', so that's why he beat you up."

Jonathan looked down in shame. He should have known something like this was bound to happen.

"But I don't believe him", Nancy spoke again. "I know what really happened."

Jonathan panicked. Did she know about the...other part? How could she possibly know?

Nancy put her hand on Jonathan's shoulder in compassion. "I know what really happened, because...he did it to me too."

Jonathan looked up in surprise. Whatever he had expected to hear, it wasn't this.

"He cornered me in the auditorium after everyone else had left. I was so ashamed...so afraid of what people would think of me if I told anyone. So I didn't tell. It was horrible, seeing him in class every day after it happened. But then...then you reported him to the school nurse and got him expelled. And I'm so relieved that he isn't around anymore. So I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you for being brave enough to do what I couldn't."

Jonathan looked at her absolutely dumbfounded. He had no idea Billy had been making other victims too. "I'm sorry that happened to you", he said.

Nancy smiled. "Can we sit down with you? We've been classmates for so long and we don't even really know each other."

Jonathan nodded. "That's true. And that while our brothers are practically best friends."

Nancy chuckled. "Yeah. Sometimes when you come to pick up Will, I can't help but notice how great the bond between you two is. To be honest, it makes me a little jealous. I wish I had that kind of relationship with Mike."

Jonathan couldn't believe what he just heard. Someone was actually jealous of something he had? The surprises just kept on coming recently.

"Hey everyone!"

Jonathan turned around to the familiar voice. His heart made a little jump when he saw it was Steve coming up to their table.

"Sorry I'm late, we had a pop quiz in math class and we weren't allowed to leave until everyone was finished." Steve sat down besides Jonathan. "So how is everyone today? There's a basketball game Saturday, are you all coming to watch me play?"

Before Jonathan even knew what happened, the group had made a plan to watch the game together Saturday. And to meet up for pizza afterwards! Jonathan had never done anything like that before. Until recently, he had never even talked to the girls before. And now they

were talking and making plans like the four of them had been friends forever. Jonathan smiled. Maybe this school year wasn't going to be so bad after all.

12. Chapter 12

Chapter 12

February 4th, 1984. Jonathan yawned as he woke up. It was Saturday. And not just any Saturday: it was his 17th birthday! Excited, he walked downstairs to grab some breakfast in the kitchen.

"Happy birthday to you,

happy birthday to you,

happy birthday,

happy birthday,

happy birthday to youuuuu!"

Jonathan couldn't believe what he was seeing. In the kitchen were his mom, his brother and Steve, all smiling and singing to him. And that wasn't all: in front of them on the table was a delicious looking chocolate cake with seventeen burning candles.

"Good morning birthday boy!" Joyce said with a smile. She kissed her son on the cheek. "Look what we made for you! It's your favorite cake!"

"Yeah, we just felt like you deserved it, you know, since usually you are the one making delicious breakfast for all of us", Steve added in.

Will interrupted as he jumped on Jonathan for a hug. "Happy birthday big brother!" Jonathan cheerfully hugged him back.

"Well hurry up now and blow out those candles, some of us are hungry you know", Steve jested.

Jonathan happily obliged.

"This really is delicious cake. Thanks mom!" Jonathan said with his mouth full.

"Watch your manners sweetheart!", Joyce said jokingly. "Also, it isn't me you should be thanking. It was actually Steve who did most of the work."

Steve blushed as Jonathan looked at him surprised. "So you do know how to cook!"

"Well yeah, but it is just easier when you do it, you know."

Jonathan shot him a mockingly insulted glare.

"I'm so excited about the party tonight!" Will raved. "We're going to watch movies and eat cake and have lots of fun! Mike and Dustin and Lucas and Max and Eleven and Nancy and Barb will all be there!"

"Don't forget Hopper", Steve said as he shot a naughty grin at Joyce.

She blushed. "Yes it will be lots of fun!" She said as she tried to talk over his comment.

"I have a gift for you", Steve said as he turned towards Jonathan. "But I'd like to give it to you upstairs. *In private*", he said as he glared towards Will and Joyce, who could barely contain their curiosity.

Neither could Jonathan, so as soon as they finished their cake, he and Steve rushed upstairs to his bedroom.

Once they got there, and made sure the door was properly closed and no one was spying on them, Steve began to speak. "You know, we have been together for almost four months now. And I just want you to know I am so happy I found you." He blushed. "You make me the happiest guy in the world. However..." Steve paused for a moment. "I feel like there is one more thing I have to do to make up to you for the past."

Jonathan smiled. "I have forgiven you a long time ago", he reassured him.

"But still, for my own conscience, I'm going to make up to you."

Steve grabbed a beautifully wrapped box from under the bed. "This is for you. Happy birthday, sweetheart", he said as he placed a kiss

on Jonathan's lips.

Jonathan carefully unwrapped his lover's present. He gasped as he saw what was inside the box. "Oh honey, you shouldn't have!"

It was a brand new camera. A better model even than the one he used to have.

"Really you shouldn't have, I could never give you back anything this expensive."

Steve quickly put a kiss on Jonathan's mouth, to stop him from rambling. "Shh, I really don't want to talk about money right now. Besides, I owe you this. I was the one who broke your previous camera. This really was the least I could do. Just enjoy the gift! And make some beautiful pictures of the party tonight."

Jonathan looked down at the floor and smiled. "Thank you", he said softly.

Steve could never resist his boyfriend when he did that: staring down at the floor, smiling shyly, blushing. It was the cutest thing ever. He pulled him in for a tight hug. For a few minutes each silently cherished the moment.

"I think I'm ready", Jonathan broke the silence. "You have been so patient and understanding with me. For the longest time I couldn't trust anyone because of...everything that happened. At first I couldn't even handle it when you touched my back. But you have been so kind to me. You never pushed me to do anything. You have always respected my boundaries, even when I never wanted to go any further than kissing for the past months. You were there for me when I needed you..." Jonathan paused for a moment as he turned to look his lover in the eyes. "You are the one for me. And I'm ready to...to do more than just kissing. " He blushed and quickly looked down. That hadn't been easy for him to say.

Steve softly put his hand under Jonathan's chin and lifted it slightly, making their gazes meet.

"Are you really sure?"

Jonathan nodded. He was nervous, but sure about what he wanted.

"Okay. But we're going to take it slow. And if at any time you want me to stop, just say it, okay?"

Jonathan nodded again, thankful that Steve was being so careful with him.

"Promise me you'll speak up if you feel uncomfortable?" Steve urged again.

Jonathan raised his head again to look Steve in the eyes. "I promise", he said sincerely.

That was all the confirmation Steve needed. He pulled Jonathan in for a kiss, while frantically moving his hands underneath his lover's clothes. Clumsily he managed to take off his shirt. For a moment he slowed down and softly caressed the uneven marks on his lover's back. "You're beautiful", he whispered. In response Jonathan hugged him with such fervor that he fell backwards on the bed. For a moment he was too stunned to respond as he felt Jonathan on top of him, kissing him. He couldn't help but smile as he saw him turning red, realizing what he just had done. Jonathan wasn't used to letting himself go, to losing control like that.

'That's okay, I'll teach him', Steve thought with a grin. Swiftly he grabbed Jonathan by his arms and turned him on his back, positioning himself on top of him and pinning him down by his wrists. He kissed him on his neck and slowly started to make his way down. Jonathan gasped as Steve reached his hips and started unzipping his pants.

"Are you sure you want to continue?"

Jonathan nodded eagerly. This was a whole new experience for him. Terrifying yet intoxicating at the same time. He desired nothing more than for Steve to continue, yet was afraid of surrendering to his lover's movements, afraid to let go and let pleasure take over.

Steve sensed there was still a hurdle to be overcome. Slowly he pulled down the other boy's pants and underwear. He started

planting kisses on his lower belly and his inner thighs.

Jonathan groaned. He couldn't take his lover's teasing anymore.

"Just tell me you want it baby", Steve whispered in a hoarse voice.

"I-I w-want it" Jonathan softly stuttered, blushing.

Not good enough.

"Tell me what you want baby" Steve spoke between kisses.

"I want...I w-want you t-to..." Jonathan hesitated. He knew the words but couldn't get himself to speak them. Years of humiliation had built a wall of shame inside him that proved virtually impossible to break through.

"Relax baby. Relax and enjoy." Steve softly stroked his inner thighs and began planting kisses at the base of his shaft.

Jonathan moaned in ecstasy, aching for more. He craved nothing more than to feel his lover's lips on him.

"Say it" Steve ordered again, his tone more demanding now.

"I w-want you to...s-suck my c-cock", he finally caved in, overcome by desire. His cheeks burned bright red.

Steve grinned. That was much better already. But there was still room for improvement.

"Beg me for it."

Jonathan lifted his head up in surprise to face his lover. He couldn't be serious, right? He'd already given him what he wanted, and now suddenly the stakes were raised. His indignation was quickly replaced by pure exaltation as Steve raised his head to the tip of Jonathan's cock and slowly traced his tongue around it. Once. He then lifted his gaze to meet Jonathan's.

He raised an eyebrow. "Still waiting."

Jonathan felt like he was going to explode. His self-control was faltering, the wall inside was crumbling. He wanted, no, needed Steve's mouth around him, NOW. Nothing else mattered anymore.

"P-please s-suck my c-cock. Please!"

Steve smirked. Those were the magic words. He didn't waste any time taking a shivering Jonathan in his mouth and started to move up and down rhythmically.

Jonathan moaned in delight. Steve felt himself getting more and more turned on by the sounds of his lover. As he fastened the pace, he quickly unzipped his own pants and started stroking himself in the same rhythm.

Jonathan's breathing got increasingly faster. Before he knew it a wave of ecstasy came over him. He felt himself release in his lover's mouth. Panting, he looked down and saw that Steve had come too.

Steve swallowed and positioned himself next to Jonathan. He felt his lover's arms curling up around him and pulling him closer. For a few minutes they lay together in silence, trying to catch their breath and wrap their minds around everything that had just happened.

"You know, if anyone had told me in September that this is what my life would look like now, I wouldn't have believed them", Jonathan said drowsily. "All the good things that have happened to me: I actually have friends now. I have a better relationship with my mom, with my coworkers." He turned his head towards his lover. "And most importantly, I found you. Never in my life had I expected to ever be in a relationship with Steve Harrington."

Steve turns to Jonathan with a smile. He plants a kiss on his lover's forehead and shrugs: "Stranger things have happened".

The End